

Physical Activity Guidelines: What Counts as Aerobic Activities

(Dave Patania: Announcer)

All these people are engaging in aerobic activities. What does that mean? Well, aerobics, what is also referred to as “cardio,” is any activity that gets you breathing harder and your heart beating faster for a continuous period of time.

Aerobic activity could be walking briskly or running hard, riding a bicycle or pushing a lawnmower, swimming in the sun or dancing under the stars. I’m Dave Patania, and in this video I’ll lead you through the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans and show you what counts in the recommendations for aerobic activities.

First, let’s review the Guidelines. It is recommended that most adult Americans get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity or an equivalent combination of both moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity each week.

Intensity is simply how hard your body is working during aerobic activity. To count towards meeting the Guidelines, it requires a moderate or vigorous level of effort. But how do you know if you’re doing a light-, moderate-, or vigorous-intensity aerobic activity?

For most people, daily activities such as shopping or light housework don’t increase your heart rate very much. That makes these activities light-intensity.

Things such as walking briskly, swimming laps, or mowing the lawn increase their heart rate some, making them moderate-intensity activities.

Vigorous-intensity activities include such workouts as running, playing basketball, swimming competitively, or mountain biking. These activities really get your heart pumping and your breathing heavy.

Here's a simple way to find out your level of activity. It is called the "talk test." I've just started walking slowly on this treadmill, a light-intensity activity. As you can hear, I can still speak normally. But in a few minutes when I increase my pace ...

Okay, now I've raised my heart rate and even broken a sweat. This is the moderate-intensity level. I'm still able to talk fairly normally but listen when I try to sing.

Luckily for you, I can't sing at this level, which is the same for people walking briskly, dancing, pushing a lawn mower, or playing doubles tennis. Now I'll start jogging.

As you can tell now, I'm not able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. I'm breathing hard and fast, and my heart rate has increased quite a bit. This is vigorous-intensity activity.

Wow. That was a nice little workout. For most adults, vigorous-intensity activities include jogging, climbing stairs, playing basketball, or swimming laps. What all this means is that if

you're looking to get the benefits of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity in less time, you can gradually replace some of your moderate-level activities with vigorous aerobic activities.

A rule of thumb is that one minute of vigorous-intensity activity equals about two minutes of moderate-intensity activity. In other words, for every 10 minutes of vigorous activity undertaken, you're getting about the same benefits as doing 20 minutes of a moderate activity

Many people prefer this option because it gives them important health benefits in half the time. However, if you haven't been very active lately, please work your way up to the more vigorous activities. It is important for your safety and health to feel comfortable doing moderate activities before moving up the intensity.

Gradually replace moderate activities such as brisk walking, with vigorous activities that take a lot more effort, like jogging. The Guidelines are all about doing appropriate types and amounts of activity that also are appropriate for your fitness level.

What counts in your aerobic activities is getting active because some physical activity is always better than none. The more time you spend doing aerobic activities, the more benefits you will gain. I'm Dave Patania, asking you to raise that heart rate up and get active, healthy, and happy.